



# Twenty Four

The Magazine of XXIV Squadron Association



Issue 18

2011 is our 96th Anniversary

Summer 2011

## Pastures New Edition



Twenty Four is the Newsletter of 24 Squadron RAF Association and issued once a year to all members.

Contributions to Assoc. Sec at :- **15 Birch Grove CHIPPENHAM Wilts SN15 1DD**  
email: [the24secretary@royalairforce.net](mailto:the24secretary@royalairforce.net) data or pictures on disc most acceptable



## The Photo Album -



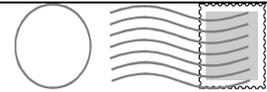
We have now a rather splendid view of the proposed site for the Memorial to Major L G Hawker VC showing the Church and Lawn area in Ligny-Thilloy sent in by Chas Whitaker. What you see is the First World War Memorial itself, the local church at the rear.

To remind you, the date for your diary to start planning is **Friday 11 November 2011** – a public holiday and national day of Remembrance in France.

Cover Photo is a collage of Stations Old and New



# Editorial



Contents	Page No
The 2010 Reunion	3
Latest from XXIV	5
Maternity Mission	8
Mailbox	10
Graeme Donald	11
Photo Album	14
Keeping in Touch	15
Diary of Nav Pt 13	18
Notice Board	22
Hawker Memorial	23
Late News	24

It's pasture new for the Squadron and the Association as both head for new territory for the coming years. Looking through the history book, Lyneham has been a home to XXIV since 1968, the longest single stay on record. What a difference from the 19 moves it had between Feb 1916 - Dec 1918. that certainly puts it in perspective. In omnia parati does seem appropriate.

Be sure to grab the opportunity to come along to this years reunion on the **1st October 2011** and help the Squadron settle in at Brize Norton.

This hard copy issue is still Black and White BUT colour on the web, take a peek if you can. One of the quickest methods of broadcasting news, events gossip is our [Blog Book](#). Use has been made of this medium to post updates between Newsletters, especially for items about XXIV Squadron that appear in the local paper. Do try it out, give it a browse and add your own comments.

## Editor

David Burgin

## Association President

Air Com Dick Gould

## Association Committee

- Keith Chapman - Chairman
- Sam Wright - Dep. Chair
- Keith Rayner - Treasurer
- David Burgin - Secretary

## Squadron Liaison

W/C Tim Jones (31 Jan 11)

S/L Daz Rawlins

## URGENT Editor Wanted

To allow the current Editor to concentrate on the Association Web Site's development, the job of Newsletter Editor is up for grabs. Ideally suit anyone with reasonable IT skills, e-mail access and keen on Aviation research. You will enjoy this opportunity to give the current Newsletter a make over and reach a readership of 300 members each year.

You would work closely with the Secretary and Web Site Author to ensure a seamless end product. Full details and background from Assoc Sec.

## Reunion Report for Sat 2<sup>nd</sup> Oct 2010

For all of you not able to attend the Reunion's, this article is a belated attempt to give you a bit of a feel of what the day is like. So let's put my hasty notes back into some form of narrative and see if we can recapture a little bit of the occasion.

An excellent turn out for the 2010 Reunion for what was to be the last one at RAF Lyneham. It was to be also W/C Andy Bacon's last briefing to the Association before handing over to W/C Pete Cockers on the 15th November. What did catch ndy's eye was the impressive display of plastic scale models set up in the Squadron foyer of all the aircraft ever flown by XXIV Squadron. Our thanks to Henry Luxton for taking the time and effort in making and laying out such a wide range of planes that

put a Messerschmitt and a Spitfire next to each other, not a boast that can be made my many Squadrons.

The state of play during Current Ops was vividly shown on a video of the night time missions being flown that require decoys to be deployed to ensure success. Crew availability is the main concern as the Squadron is not able to complete all that is being asked of them.

The crews are located out in the Falklands, Qatar and Afghanistan carrying out Tactical Air Transport and Air Drops. Other roles are VIP and Non VIP movements of personnel from all nations in theatre which includes Afghan National Army. The Squadron are still working closely with 47 Air Despatch as by dropping stores, it reduces the IED threat to land convoys. All this is done with pinpoint precision with modern interlinked on board systems to make it the SAFE option. Missions were also flown to Haiti as part of the International earthquake relief in Jan 10.



*(Continued from page 3)*

If you thought the C130J was the new plane on the block, it was a timely reminder that crews had celebrated its 10th birthday in Nov 09 and that it was proving itself worthy of its capabilities.

The Squadron still continue to fit in sports and charitable work such as walking the whole 87 mile length of Hadrian's Wall. Future tasks are the move over to Brize Norton in June 11 of 24, 30 and 47 Squadron's which will become a Hercules enclave and the prospect of flying the A400M when it enters service. The downside seems to be the very limited amount of space to operate from in comparison with the facilities being left behind at Lyneham, due to close in July 2012.

As part of the full briefing we have become accustomed to each year, it was the turn of F/L Phil Mobbs, who is leading on the Hawker Memorial project to bring us up to date. Lots more details on our Blog and AGM Minutes about this appeal. Next it was the turn of Clive Harley to relive the early days of Lyneham, the farm, or that's how it seemed to him.

The airfield had no fences, just a few huts, each containing single stove and "home" for up to 24 personnel. Food was still on ration and not very good quality but at least they had a cinema and a NAAFI in Chippenham, 10 miles away on what is now the site of the Police Station. The main entrance to the camp was in Bradenstoke village, opposite to the current arrangements and the landscape was littered with huge numbers of old aircraft ready for disposal. Clive was serving as ground crew looking after the Hastings before eventually being posted to Singapore.

Our last presentation was by Major Todd Shugart of the USAF. Todd has been relishing his role as Squadron Historian, curating and totally revamping the History Room with some help from other Squadron members, which on the day was a big draw and impressed one and all. New projects include proper photo albums, dealing with family research queries from the public and compiling an in-depth data file on each aircraft flown by XXIV. Todd's personal favourite aircraft is the Hastings. Quite a library of books is building up, including John Mitchel's tales of flying with Churchill. The move to Brize is a big challenge for all the artefacts which have to be catalogued due to the limited amount of space in then new Squadron HQ.

For the rest of the afternoon, the Liaison Team had arranged trips to 47 Air Despatch Squadron, a view over a C130J out on the apron, and every boys toy, the Simulator experience. A raffle raised £104 and as usual, the afternoon slipped away with many

friends reunited and stories remembered until next time.

The day was rounded off with a very healthy turn out of nearly 90 Members, Guests and Squadron personnel for the Ladies Guest Night, held this year in the Sergeants Mess and the last gathering of all at Lyneham.

## **In Omnia Parati.**



## Latest from “The Squadron”



### **Wing Commander T T Jones BSc (Hons) MA RAF**

Wing Commander Tim Jones is currently Officer Commanding XXIV Squadron, the Hercules Operational Conversion Unit. A graduate in physics from Edinburgh University, he joined the RAF in 1995, having also spent 4 years on East Lowlands Universities Air Squadron at RAF Turnhouse.

After a brief hold with 10 Sqn, RAF Brize Norton and 111(F) Sqn, RAF Leuchars, he completed flying training on the Jetstream T1 in 1998. Posted to RAF Lyneham, he spent the next 9 years on the Hercules Force flying both the C-130K and C-130J. This period saw his involvement in a number of operations across world, including East Timor, the Balkans, Iraq and Afghanistan. Specialising in Low Flying, NVG and Airdrop, Jones was promoted to Squadron Leader in 2006 to run the Hercules Tactical Training Flight.

For its work delivering training for Op HERRICK in 2007, the Flight was awarded a C-in-C's Commendation and the Guild of Air Pilots and Navigators' Brackley Memorial Trophy. Jones was posted to the Ministry of Defence in late 2007 to the Capability Sponsor (Expeditionary Logistics and Support), with responsibilities for C-130, A-400M and C-17. In 2009, he joined ACSC 13 at JSCSC Shrivenham, graduating in July 2010.

His current tour began on 31 Jan 2011. He is married to Susie (Maths graduate – Edinburgh) and has a daughter (aged 5) and a son (aged 3). His interests include keeping fit, running his local village hall and playing the piano.

### **THE SQUADRON**

XXIV Squadron provides training for the Hercules C130J Mk 4/5 force in worldwide Air Transport and Aerial Delivery in support of the UK defence mission. The Squadron consist of around 60 personnel including Aircrew, Operations Support and Administrative staff.

### **XXIV SQN OPERATIONAL CONVERSION UNIT – THE FUTURE**

2011 is a year of great change for 24 Sqn, after 96 years on the Front Line; the Squadron hangs up its Operational hat and becomes the Operational Conversion Unit for the C130J Force. XXIV Sqn also moves from its old home at RAF Lyneham to its New Home, RAF Brize Norton, where it will move into its new purpose built HQ and Simulator Building.

This change amalgamated the 3 training flights of J Conversion Training Flight (24 Sqn), J Tactical Training Flight (30 Sqn) and SF Trg Flight (47 Sqn) onto one Sqn. This has aligned all training under one command structure, allowing better interaction between the C130J Force, the AT/AAR Force HQ and 2 Group.

The Sqn, commanded by Wg Cdr Tim Jones, has 3 flights responsible for training 30 and 47 Sqn for current and future operations:

A Flight prepares Aircrew for Strategic Operations on the C130J, taking ab initio Pilots and Weapons Systems Operators (WSOp) from RAF Cranwell and experienced Pilots and WSOps from other operational forces within the RAF. A flight also provides training to foreign Air Forces when required.



## Latest from "The Squadron" cont

B Flight train aircrew in the tactical elements of C130J operations, training Pilots and WSOps the fine art of Low Level Flying, Natural Surface Operations and Air Despatch.

Training Support Flight, provide training and administrative support to the Sqn by managing, analysing and evaluating training to ensure our crews are always fit for purpose; always delivering the desired effect on operations.

A few words from Wg Cdr Tim Jones:

'The recent re-organising of our aircrew training back under one Sqn gives us a great opportunity to be more co-ordinated, more efficient and more accountable. With a brand new OCU building at Brize as well as updated and upgraded simulators, the next few years for XXIV Sqn look very good indeed. We've had the build up to Brize, now I think it's time for us to get on with it – it should be fun; it will certainly be a challenge!'

24 Squadron continues to be at the forefront of British Military Air Transport Operations, providing training for 30 and 47 Sqn in strategic and tactical disciplines maintaining its long prestigious history and living up to its motto: 'IN OMNIA PARATI'



Thought you might be interested in this article and photo in the local Wiltshire Gazette and Herald by reporter Tom Mooney. The passing of another phase in the RAF Lyneham, Hercules story.

"Huge parts of a Hercules aircraft have been moved from RAF Lyneham, in one of the largest transportation operations on the county's roads.

The fuselage of the decommissioned Hercules C-130 was moved to Hixon Airfield, in Staffordshire, where it will be used for parts. It was carried, at around 7am on Sunday, on a 137ft long specialist load transporter, weighing 44 tonnes. Accompanied by a police escort, it made its way down the A3102, before joining the M4. The wings of the aircraft were transported before Christmas on a similar vehicle.

Andy Humm, a former RAF engineer, who now works as a contractor on the base, said: "The village was out in force to see it passing by. There were even people out in their dressing gowns watching, despite it being below freezing. "It took ages to get through because it was so large. It had problems going over the roundabouts.

"I have spent many years working on that particular aircraft, mostly when it was a Mark One plane during the Falklands.

"I obviously worked on a lot of them but certain tail numbers stick out and this was one of them."

The Hercules aircraft – also known as Fat Albert – has long been associated with RAF Lyneham, having first entered service there

*(Continued on page 7)*



## Latest from "The Squadron" cont

in the late-1960s.

It was supposed to be decommissioned but was handed a stay of execution by the large-scale military cuts.

An RAF Lyneham spokesman said: "People will obviously connect the moving of these parts with the impending closure of Lyneham but that is not the case.

"The Hercules has simply been taken out of service and the sections of the plane are being transported to Hixon, where they will be used for parts."

Police have issued warnings that there will be similar journeys taking place on the next two Sunday mornings, January 16 and 23, subject to the weather and operational conditions.

These are expected to be the wings and fuselage of another Hercules, also travelling to Hixon, and will also be transported at around 7am.

RAF Lyneham is due to be closed by 2012, with all of its aircraft and functions being shifted to RAF Brize Norton in Oxfordshire.

North Wiltshire MP James Gray is leading the charge for the base to continue as a military facility.

He said: "I would love to see the army using it."



### SQUADRON GOODIES STOCK LIST

Another little job I promised to do for the Squadron after the Reunion this year was to promote the range of items they have for sale. So below is a list and photo of the goodies that are available and a couple that may need to be ordered rather than in stock.

### 24 SQUADRON STOCK PRICES 2010

#### In Stock

- |                    |        |
|--------------------|--------|
| 1. Cumberbund      | £25.00 |
| 2. Small A/C Print | £5.00  |
| 3. Large A/C Print | £7.00  |
| 4. Cloth Chevron   | £2.50  |
| 5. Cloth Crests    | £5.00  |
| 6. Black T-Shirts  | £8.00  |
| 7. Sand T-Shirts   | £6.50  |
| 8. Bow Tie         | £7.00  |
| 9. Tattoo Sheet    | £0.20  |

#### To Order

- |            |        |
|------------|--------|
| 1. Mug     | £11.50 |
| 2. Tankard | £20.00 |

To place an order, contact:-

The Adjutant, XXIV Squadron, TMRF, RAF Brize Norton, CARTERTON, OX18 3LX stating item/s and quantity and despatch address. Make cheques payable to "24 Squadron Fund".



## Maternity Mission to Gibraltar - circa 1977

**From: Brian Spurway (24 Sqn 1965/67, 1967/69, 1976/78)**

Mention of the Stornoway twins in the Summer 2010 edition of *"Twenty Four"* brought back my own memories of a very similar, but much less publicised, 24 Sqn mission.

It was shortly after midnight on the 12th October 1977 that Lyneham Ops phoned my MQ asking me, as the 24 Sqn Air Eng Leader, to nominate someone from my section for an urgent Medivac flight which was to depart Lyneham ASAP; rather than wake someone else up I agreed to go myself. Not long afterwards a crew-bus turned up outside the house with four other crewmembers on board and we duly presented ourselves at Ops. A critically ill infant, the newly and very prematurely born first child of a young RN couple stationed in Gibraltar, required urgent life-saving treatment in the UK.

Back in 1966 I had been made very aware of the Service's ability to mount Medivac (Casevac) and Priority 1 flights when my father, then a W/O stationed at RAF Tengah, had experienced a major heart attack. At the time I was an air engineer with 24 Sqn at Colerne but was actually taking part in an exercise at RAF Leconfield when I received the bad news. I was told about my father's critical condition and that I could fly out to visit him if I so wished. Given no more details than that, and having made my decision to go, the "organisation" took over. Once I'd got my kit sorted out I was driven to York station, provided with a rail warrant and 10 bob for a taxi from King's Cross to Paddington. I was met at Bath station by a RAF driver with a staff-car and was driven to my MQ at Colerne. Here I was allowed barely enough time to do anything other than pick up a suitcase, already mostly packed by my wife (no "Did you pack your own case?" in those days!), before being driven across to Lyneham and straight onto the pan outside the Operations building where a VIP Comet 4C, with some of its engines already running, was waiting. The AQM (as was then) rushed me up the steps and into the Comet where my brother (also in the RAF and stationed at Fairford) was sitting in one of the well-padded seats waiting for me; we were the only two passengers!

Back to Lyneham and our flight down to Gibraltar. The Loadmaster and I bussed out to the relevant Line Servicing Sqn to pick up the

F700 and then out to XV295 which, I'm fairly sure, was a pre-prepared QRA aircraft. Already in the Hercules hold was a baby's incubator with a couple of WRAF nurses, undoubtedly from Wroughton hospital, and up on the flight deck, sitting on the bunk, was a very attractive, if somewhat bleary eyed, young female paediatrician who had also been called out of her bed.

It appeared that the baby was unlikely to survive long enough for us to get to Gib but we were to set off anyway avoiding Spanish airspace, which at that time was closed to all British military flights. It was still in the very small hours when we climbed out of Lyneham to make our way down over the Bay of Biscay, and Portugal, towards the southwestern corner of Spain. The big orange bun made its scheduled appearance so that, as we turned in towards the Straits of Gibraltar, it shone straight into our sleep-deprived eyes. ATC at Gibraltar assured us that the baby was still alive so without any fuss, other than negotiating the difficulties that the Spanish airspace restrictions had placed on RAF North Front's approach patterns, we landed on the easterly runway and taxied onto the visiting aircraft dispersal area near the ATC tower.

Once parked we shut down the engines but left the GTC running ready for a quick departure. An ambulance rolled up beside us and what must have been the youngest looking married couple I'd ever seen, and certainly the most distressed, climbed out and got into the Hercules. Behind them was a nurse carrying a tiny little bundle that was instantly put into the incubator and into the care of the experts we had on board. We were given clearance to start engines and expedite our departure; our route details would follow when negotiations with the Spanish had been sorted. Before I'd even opened the source of bleed-air to start the first engine ATC asked us to continue the start but hold our position, with the simple reason being "We have another for you!" Hurtling towards us was another ambulance, it too stopped beside us and out jumped a lady, with her clothing covered in blood, cradling yet another child. This toddler, waving goodbye to her father from a first floor balcony as he was off to his work place, had fallen over the railings and plunged head first to the ground. She had suffered major life threatening head injuries.

*(Continued on page 9)*



As we were taxiing to the runway a nurse came up to brief us on the two children and the requirements for the transit back to the UK. Heart-breakingly we learnt that the odds were heavily against either of them making it back to the UK, speed was an absolute necessity and, for me personally as the Air Engineer, the cabin altitude had to remain as near as possible to what it was there on the ground at Gibraltar, for the whole flight, as neither child could safely be subjected to any atmospheric pressure change. This requirement meant that our maximum transit altitude had to be less than 10000ft amsl for above that the Hercules pressurisation system couldn't maintain sea level conditions in the cabin; I elected to use the pressurisation system's manual control rather than rely on the, more likely to fluctuate, automatic selection.

Once airborne, we emphasised our new "Medivac" call sign, as opposed to the RAF "Ascot" (Air Support Command Operational Transport) one used on the flight down, turned sharply left and headed straight up through Spain.

En route we were advised that our destination was to be RAF Odiham. Miraculously both children survived the flight and, as soon as we had landed and taxied to a stop, they were rushed off the aircraft, one into a Wessex (rotors already turning) and the other into an ambulance, to be taken to their separate specialist care. All in a RAF transport crew's day at work, but a day much more poignant than most.

We made our way back to Lyneham pretty chuffed that, so far, everything had gone well, but would the two children survive their ordeals? The Squadron received a message a few days later to let us know that the tiny premature baby, suffering from numerous medical complications, the least of which was double pneumonia, had responded to treatment and was going to be okay; but of the second child we heard nothing.

Some twelve or so years later my wife, a MOD Civil Servant, was working as PS to a senior Civil Servant with the MOD(Navy) in Bath; another CS in the same department had invited us to a BBQ at his home just outside Bath. During the evening I got into a group that included the host's wife; she told me she was aware that I had been stationed at Lyneham flying Hercules and that she had once had the dubious pleasure of a ride in one from Gibraltar to the UK; her husband had been stationed at Gibraltar (yes, you're way ahead of me) when their small daughter had suffered major head injuries by falling off of a balcony. I was, to use a modern expression, 'gob-smacked' at the coincidence and told her that I had actually been part of that aircraft's crew. I'm sure she sensed that I was

unwilling to ask about her daughter because, before I could say anything, she pointed across a large lawn to a paddock where a young, and obviously very fit teenager, long blond hair flowing in the breeze, was energetically jumping hurdles astride her pony.

Our crew's long working day all those years ago was now complete, I'd been part of a team that had helped to save two young lives and it doesn't come any better than that.

(The RAF Aircrew Flying Log Book (unlike the Pilot's version) records no crewmembers' names other than the aircraft captain for a particular flight; therefore, for this flight, the only other name I have recorded is that of the late Flt Lt Dave Perrin. My apologies for not being able to recall who the other members of the crew were but hopefully, if any of them get to read this, they will remember the flight.)



Mailbox ✉ Your Letters

***We do seem to have quite a lively bit of snail and e-mail traffic on issues featured in the Newsletter and long may it continue. So for your interest and comments, read on.***

***Ps - you can also comment on line at the BLog Book.***

A lovely letter from one of the early Association Members, No 25, Roy Holder in Wroxham.

Thank you for the latest notes on the A.G.M. Meeting held on 2nd October 2010. Sadly i have been unable to attend your meetings at Lyneham for quite a while, it really is too far for me to travel. I am one of the original members of 24 Squadron Association and attended the inaugural meeting. At that time i lived in Sussex and of course could easily attend your meetings by car.

I was posted to Hendon to 24 Squadron in September 1940 and I remained there on and off until I was demobbed in 1946. I remember vividly the aircraft at that time, D.H.89's, we even had one D.H.86 (4 Engines) : we had an Electra, later Dakotas, Flamingos, Yorks, a 'Wimpy' fitted with wooden guns and Lockheed Hudsons'

Now with the impending move to Brize Norton, it's even more difficult I very much hope you will continue to send me your Newsletter magazine I enclose a small donation for your Association.

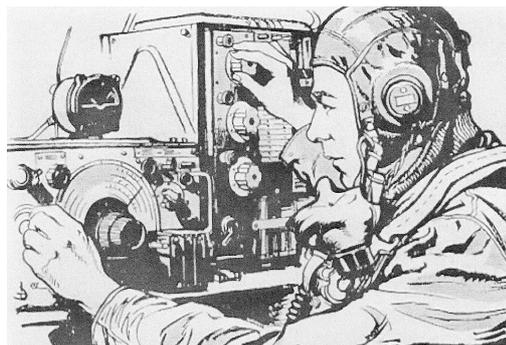


Please find enclosed a CD Rom copy of the final edition of my manuscript, "**Here There & Everywhere**", the Biography of my late Father, Flight Lieutenant Tom Clark'

A copy has been forwarded to a commissioning Editor for Pen & Sword Book Publishers and I await the outcome. Many people and RAF Associations have assisted me towards this end product and I would like to

take this opportunity to thank you personally for all your help and contribution to this project, as without it the contents of the book would be incomplete.

*Best Regards, Chris Clark*



A small sample from the book:-

"During September 1949 Tom was recalled to the RAF with his short service Commission and went onto 10 Squadron as a Signals Leader flying VIP Flights out of Waterbeach for four months; this Squadron was disbanded on the 20<sup>th</sup> of February 1950, and on the 27<sup>th</sup> of February 1950 he joined 24 Squadron who also ran VIP Flights at Waterbeach and within days

The Squadron moved to nearby Bassingbourn, where he remained for a further four months as Waterbeach's runways were due to be re-structured in the March, the base having changed its status from Transport to Fighter Command and brought in two Meteor Squadrons. We lived in Officers Married Quarters at Waterbeach, but I recall nothing of our short time there, being less than five years old.



Chris also alerted us to the many references to XXIV Squadron in the 1986 book "The King's Flight - Fifty Years of Royal Flying". A copy of the book was purchased from Amazon very cheaply and has been presented to the Squadron for the History Room. Here is an extract:-

*(Continued on page 17)*



## **Memories of 24 Squadron Graeme Vivian Donald**

It has been suggested within recent times that I am called upon to record some events that were my good luck to participate in during service in 24 Squadron during WW2. Perhaps a slide into my other squadron activities appear at time but the purpose of these notes are to reflect 24 Squadron in particular, and the RAF, together with the RNZAF, being a New Zealander born and bred, what I was brought up to be by my parents is not surpassed by anything other than appreciated of the RAF service life and training.

Time tends to obscure memories, so I shall endeavor to portray some records and fun that were enjoyed in 24, which squadron I was appointed to on 12<sup>th</sup> June 1942. How I got there is not to be portrayed here except, that I had spent about two years in Coastal Command 206 and 200 Squadron, respectively at Bircham Newton and Bathurst, Gambia, both equipped with Hudson's.

My first encounter with 24 Squadron was on 16<sup>th</sup> May 1942 after arriving in Cairo having delivered a worn out Hudson from Bathurst, to be advised of an option to get to UK via a Hudson flown by Squadron Leader Blennerhassett of 24 Squadron who happened to be in Cairo, or to go back to the UK as a civvy passenger in a Caster flying boat rather like a Sunderland, down the Nile, across Africa to Lagos, up to Lisbon, then to Foynes in Southern Ireland, then across to Witton in a Frobisher. The journey took seven days; I certainly opted for it, not being attracted to sitting in the back of a Hudson flown by some unqualified skipper! Little did I realize at the time that when back in London, they told me I was not going back to Bathurst with a new Hudson, but had to report to 24 Squadron at Hendon immediately and that Squadron Leader Blennerhassett was to be one of the flight commanders with w/cdr Collins as C.O. From a tent in the arse hole of the empire to a bed in a decent station was too good to be true.

So on 12<sup>th</sup> June 1942 I reported to 24 and soon after met what I thought was a rather gruffy old Wingco, I could not talk like this then, but it is a long time ago and in the time ahead, on reflection he probably treated me much better than I deserved. At that time, the main job was the Malta shuttle which was generally scheduled to Portreath in the afternoon, off at midnight to Gibraltar, then late afternoon to Malta arriving about 21:00 hrs, the 03:00 hrs

take off next day, arriving Gibraltar 09:00 hrs. Generally the flight time from Portreath to Gibraltar was about 7 hours while Gibraltar to Malta similar, but shorter heading east. The purpose of the shuttle was to take passengers etc to and fro, and it was usual to do two flights between Gibraltar and Malta on each schedule then return to Hendon, which really had quite a short runway with approaches over buildings. On my first trip to Malta, one of the passengers back to Hendon was Maj. Gen Hertzberg who had been captured in the desert. On my second trip, it was Lord Cranborne, and so it went on what a delight it was to serve in a Squadron with such decent and capable people. Jack Matthew, Southgate, Stokes and many other names still come to mind after nearly 70 years. Jack became skipper of the York for Lord Louis Mountbatten. I will never forget Jack's kindness. When they were scheduled into New Zealand with Lord Louis before that we met somewhere and he asked for the address of my parents who lived in Masterton, 65 mile by road from Wellington. I told him where they lived and he took time off and trouble to go and say "hello" to them. Some years later my parents reflected on this kindness. Jack told me that he was an apple farmer in peacetime. His later co pilot was George Giradet, also a skipper in 24, who had a girlfriend on the stage of London theaters called Fanny Day. Many things happened in these days but I do recall seeing George one morning for breakfast at Hendon with a bunch of lively scratch marks on his face. He would not recall what happened last night.

During the Dakota days in 24, George slipped across to a pick up at the Azores, chat had it that when arriving at the airfield to come back to Hendon, the aircraft was a bit overloaded and George puzzled what to do as he had bought a fine load of pineapples which at that time, fetched £5 on the London market, so there was little option but to off load some freight to make up room for pineapples.

How can one reflect other than chat about a few tales which occurred between fine men at a time of stress? One night in the mess at Hendon, for some reason or other, after a couple of pints, we all started singing songs. This lead to other things as to who may have the biggest "John". Well it was pants down and it was without a doubt that Stokes won the prize, so off with his pants and half a dozen of the boys lifted him to the ceiling to get an imprint,

*(Continued on page 12)*



*(Continued from page 11)*

so he became the biggest prick in the RAF. What a fine chap "Stocky" was and I recall him in later years giving me a lift back to Hendon in a Dakota.

But don't let's forget the early days of Malta shuttle and Hudson's that had all their guns and turrets removed to allow a better weight carrying capacity. Of course, flying in and out of Malta called for night activity. I recall at about 03:00 hrs one night waiting for take off to Gibraltar while a Wellington went off to south west ahead of us bound for Cairo, on his return to east in the circuit, what we believed was a JU88 spotted him, gave him a burst, and poor chaps didn't have another tale to tell. I also recall after some liberation of North Africa taking a short cut to Malta at about 21:00 hrs, seeing a light quickly coming towards us at the same altitude of 10 000 feet.

We quickly altered course to the north east and dived a couple of thousand feet to pick up speed, as it was reported ME110's used a detector light. We got away with it. Casualties in 24 during the Malta shuttle were infrequent, but my memory is unable to relate all events, nor did I participate in them. However as the war progressed, different duties were applied to 24, among them, I was after many shuttles, sent to Portreath on detachment about early July 1943, the time had come for the USAF to participate and Liberator bombers were routed via north Atlantic then on the Portreath for briefing to Casablanca etc. About 50 aircraft at a time came through, meaning to brief about 200 flight crew on routing. Well things were a bit overcrowded, for the first echelon, they were well trained personnel and all listened to the briefing and arrived safely in North Africa. My job was to tell them how to go about it.

A few days later, the second echelon pitched up, they were quite noisy and I think with a couple of diversions. They did well. The third echelon were the new boys, quickly trained, cigar smoking folks who didn't pay too much attention to briefing. They knew it all and some didn't make it. What they mostly eventually did, was effectively assist in ending the war. So 24 had a myriad of duties, and as the North African war progressed, my duties took me to BLIDA, an airfield just a bit north of Algiers. I was meant to be the C.O. of a staging post there, but there were few other personnel and I had nothing to do but wonder what I was supposed to do. It was March 1943 and the citrus crop in the Atlas Mountains was superb. So in idleness I slipped across to Maison Blanche to ask H.Q, what to do. A very decent Wing Co asked what I had done, so I told him I flew

Hudson's. So he said we have one here doing nothing, why don't you fly it over to Cairo to see if they knew what you must do. I thought that was a good idea as my brother Haddon was there, a major in the 2<sup>nd</sup> NZEF, so I intrigued a F/LT Jamieson plus a radio operator to come along.

Haddon was at the front, but I did spend a couple for days with General Sir Herbert Hart who was a family friend who entertained me at Gezira club. Nobody seemed to care about me so after a couple of days in Cairo during which time I didn't visit Marys, we set off back west and short of the Atlas Mountains, got lost in bad weather. We saw a landing strip in the desert so landed there to be confronted by a British army major asking what the hell you are doing here. We are lost! So you are at BISKRA, we got rid of the enemy an hour ago and we are expecting a counter attack any minute. At least we knew where we were and two minutes later we were airborne to save our necks. Nothing was new in Blida except it was noted I was to proceed to Ras el Mar near Fez to operate a staging post there so I hitched hiked a ride in a Dakota with LT Schultz, USAF, to Casablanca, and still not much to do. So I hitched hiked again to Gibraltar, I say hitched hiked but in fact I jumped into a lonely Hurricane which I had not flown before. A bit of fun doing nothing in Gibraltar, so a chat with the C.O of the Spitfire Defence Squadron enabled me to take up a Spitfire for a couple of circuits of the ROCK. After a couple of days there, got a lift back to Hendon in a Dakota with F/LT Stokes with F/LT Stokes who has been previously mentioned.

After a while back home, Wingco John Collins must have felt sympathy with my stories and he set me off on one of my most privileged activities, to take Marshal of the RAF Viscount TRENCHARD on his North African visit. We set off from Hendon in a Hudson on 1<sup>st</sup> June 1943 with F/O AVERY as navigator and JACK HANNAH as radio man plus a flight steward. I suppose it was a triple purpose trip. Lord Trenchard was taken to a number of airfields in North Africa where he chatted to RAF personnel. We ran into Vivienne Leigh at one field where she was with an Ensor concert, and she gave me a smile Clark Gable had never seen. However back to the job Donald, on to Tripoli where Lord Trenchard's son had lost his life in the army, on to Cairo, back to other places and Malta there after having visited 28 Airfields, arriving back at Hendon on 16 June 1943. I to this day treasure his letter of appreciation.

My days at 24 Squadron Hendon were about  
*(Continued on page 13)*



to end, so a posting to 511 Squadron at Lyneham now came my way in November 1943. Our ties remained with 24 unit and I left the service in 1946. We now had to learn how to fly Liberators and Yorks as Hendon runway was too short. Flying the Yorks were my favorite aircraft and of course there as ASCALON of fame followed by series MW 100 etc. An early MW was set aside for Lord Louis Mountbatten with Jack Matthews as skipper and George Girardet giving him advice. Then perhaps the advent of a York set aside for Field Marshall Smuts, I think I recall the assigned skipper was Col. Nell, SAAF, who did a conversion course with us at Lyneham, and after a couple of circuits and bumps we had given him F/O Mike ENSOR, our most qualified Flight Engineer, as a crew. Against advice he quickly was off to collect MW104 at Northolt. I think to head for South Africa, but regretfully didn't make it. Belief had it that bad weather over the Swiss Alps took its toll and that was end of story. I took MW101 for two flights to Rio de Janeiro in September 1945, we organized up grading the whole aircraft and removed the camouflage paint so she became a bright shiny peace plane. Unfortunately on a return journey No 3 engine consumed 22 gallons oil on the east bound South Atlantic crossing, so a reserve aircraft with spare engine was sent to Bathurst Gambia to pick up the passengers. Air Commander Brackley was with us throughout these flights and as a Liaison officer, we were all relieved of social duties and were able to enjoy a peacetime atmosphere for a few days on each trip to Rio.

Having been commissioned in the RAF in early 1939, in due course I received an important piece of paper which gave details of my commission, these came to me probably about the late '39's and in my subsequent travels about which I didn't have a great deal of control, my commission which I treasured, has not been seen since then to this day. If I did have it, it would be destined to hang up in my rogue's gallery together with a couple of other photo's. The purpose of my writing these notes is not to try and create history, but to produce some events of interest for present 24 Squadron activities which I am sure carry on with the highest standards. The intention is right, the readers may call for better standards, It was all a long time ago.

G V DONALD



## The Photo Album -



**John Mitchel with a painting of ASCALON leaving Gibraltar**



**The Coral Room, Officers' Mess, Brize Norton**



## Keeping in Touch - Association

### **RECENT LOSSES**

We have only been informed of the following Association member passing away since the last AGM.



**AIR COMMODORE DAVID HITCHINS AO AFC RAAF RETD**  
13 January 1923 - 18 January 2011

The Summer 2008 edition of this magazine (Issue No.15) included a fascinating and highly entertaining article by Air Cdre David Hitchins in which he recalled his days as OC XXIV from 1956 to 1958. This was in the post-war era when XXIV was designated "The Commonwealth Squadron" with a proportion of its crews drawn from the air forces of Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa. During that period, the post of OC XXIV rotated between those Commonwealth air forces but

the arrangement came to an end all too soon and there were only ever two Australian commanding officers of XXIV. The first was Chas Reid who later later became Air Marshal Sir Chas Reid and CAS of the RAAF. In 1956, it was the RAAF's turn again and this time XXIV was fortunate enough to receive another outstanding commanding officer in the shape of David Hitchins.

David's operational flying had begun in New Guinea during the latter stages of WW2. He described his early career and first links with the RAF in the afore-mentioned account in Issue 15, when he also alluded to a fellow Australian called Harry Hawker who had apparently commanded XXIV at some point during WW1. But it seems that this officer was no relation to the very first commanding officer of XXIV, the Englishman Major Lanoe Hawker VC DSO who was shot down and killed by the Red Baron in November 1916.

What David modestly refrained from mentioning in his article was his impressive record during the Korean War when he flew a DC3 on numerous re-supply missions from Japan into the Taegu Valley in Korea. He undertook these sorties, often carrying heavy loads of bombs and rockets, primarily on behalf of 77 Fighter Squadron RAAF which was operating Mustangs on intensive close support operations from the forward airfield at Taegu. To keep the Mustangs supplied, David flew repeated missions into Taegu in all sorts of atrocious weather conditions, landing on a runway made of pierced steel planking and at times dodging enemy small arms fire from the surrounding area. During this critical phase of the Korean War, he also carried VIPs, other pax, cargo, mail and Medevacs - which is how he came to meet his future wife Joan who was a nursing sister in the RAAFNS at the time.

It was rumoured that David, a West Australian, was selected for the coveted role of commanding XXIV Commonwealth Squadron not merely because of his excellent track record as a highly experienced transport pilot but also so that he could beef up the Colerne cricket team. He soon got to grips both with the cricket pitches and the notoriously tricky Hastings aircraft with its four piston engines, tail wheel and temperamental performance. He later recalled that, when crossing the Atlantic in winter, the Hastings fuel tank vents would often ice up, causing the contents gauges to over-read. Thus the further one flew, the more fuel one appeared to have!

Despite the chilly married quarters in winter and warm beer in summer, David and his family really enjoyed their exchange tour with XXIV Squadron at Colerne. He was universally admired by his crews for his outstanding professionalism and positive attitude and greatly respected by



## Keeping in Touch

everyone as a commanding officer who always led from the front. He was also envied for his incredible stamina at parties and dining-in nights in the Mess! Above all, David was held in high personal esteem as a truly "good bloke" who was an excellent ambassador in all respects both for his own Air Force and for Australia.

We know from his daughters Jenny and Robyn, who have recently made a generous donation to the Hawker VC project, that David and his wife Joan always retained a strong affection for XXIV. In later life, he was able to maintain active links with his former Squadron by becoming a member of our Association. In 2008, he very kindly presented to his old Squadron one of what he liked to call his special "treasures" - a genuine aboriginal "killing" boomerang which is now permanently displayed in the office of OC XXIV. The boomerang is inscribed with David's name and the dates of his tour in command. It serves as a fitting and enduring reminder of his time as OC XXIV.

David, by then a widower, died peacefully on 18 January 2011, just a few days after his 88th birthday. With his passing, our Association has lost one of its most distinguished and admired members. He will never be forgotten by his many former friends in the RAF and other Commonwealth air forces nor by those who never had the privilege of meeting him but who have followed in his footsteps by serving on XXIV Squadron. We mourn his death but celebrate his long life and many achievements. He was a remarkable man and we salute him.

From Keith Chapman - Chairman

### Group Captain John Richardson MBE AFC

Sadly we have to report the loss of Group Captain John Richardson MBE AFC who died peacefully on 25th March 2011 aged 87. He is survived by his wife Joan and sons Nigel and Martin. The funeral was at Oxford Crematorium on the 8th April at 12.45. No flowers please but donations, if desired to the RAF Benevolent Fund. John was an early member of the Association (Member No 7) and actually on the Squadron between 1946 – 49 at Bassingbourn flying Lancastrians, Yorks and Dakotas. He was also an ex Station Commander of RAF Brize Norton.

**S/L Alan Wickes** (Sep 2010) served as a Pilot on XXIV flying York a/c out of Bassingbourn between 1947 - 1950.

### NEW MEMBERS

Thanks to an initiative of ex OC XXIV, W/C Andy Bacon who probably had the Adj rustle up a list of those who left the Sqn in recent times, we can report a healthy influx to the membership list. A total of 4 new recruits have joined the ranks and they are:-

Last Name	Initials	Mem No	Date on Sqn	Place on Sqn	Trade
Bacon	A	420	May 2008 - Nov 2010	RAF Lyneham	Pilot
Carby	H	421	Mar 1994 - Apr 1997, Jan 2007 - Jul 2009	RAF Lyneham	Pilot
Howard	P G	423	July 1965 to December 1968	RAF Colerne	Airframe Mechanic
Patterson	J	422	15 Jan 1946 - 23 Sep 1946	Blackbushe	AQM

Mailbox ☒ Your Letters - cont

*(Continued from page 10)*

It took some years for King George V's attitude to change, and it was not until 1928 that the Prince of Wales again took up flying seriously, although in the meantime he had patronised some of the early airline services to the continent' on 27 April 1928, the prince flew for thirty minutes at Northolt in a Bristol Fighter of No. 24 Squadron, piloted by Flying Officer G.C. Stemp, and two weeks later that unit's establishment was increased by the addition of a Bristol Fighter annotated 'for Special Service', a temporary allocation pending delivery of two specially-equipped Westland Wapiti IAs. The first official conveyance of a member of the Royal Family by air came on 27 May 1928, when Flight Lieutenant J.S. Don flew the Prince of Wales from Scarborough to Bircham Newton in one of the Bristol Fighters.

☒ ☒



Book publishing seems to be all the rage at the moment. The next letter was from ex Flt Sgt AQM John Patterson who spent some of his war years with XXIV. (we think that's John on the right!). He sent us a copy of his memoirs "John's War & Peace" which will also go into the History Room.

My name is John Patterson. I spent five years in the RAF during the war. After training i arrived at 1660 HCU Swinderby as a Flight Engineer. I became a member of a Lancaster bomber crew. After training we were posted to 57 Sqn East Kirkby after surviving 32 ops I was posted back to

Swinderby as a flying instructor. When the war finished i did a small course at Northolt and was posted to 24 VIP Sqn at Hendon as an AQM looking after passengers. After about three months the whole Sqn moved up to RAF Bassingbourne. At the end of the year 1946 I was demobbed and now live in West Lothian.

☒ ☒

Lastly a plug for the Flt. Engineers Asociation. Below is the last correspondence sent the Sec.

ROYAL AIR FORCE FLIGHT ENGINEER / AIR ENGINEER ASSOCIATION

A 70th anniversary dinner and weekend celebration will be held in the Lincoln / RAF Waddington area and is planned for 16th-18th September 2011. It will incorporate the association AGM with more details in due course. (Priority for invitations to the dinner will be given to association members).

Plans to launch a dedicated website are underway in order to provide members with up to date information and a means to stay in touch/provide contact with other members.

The membership subscription for new members has been set at £10.00 per annum. (Existing members will continue to pay £5.00 per annum until they receive a subsidy at the forthcoming 70th anniversary dinner given the contributions made by them thus far).

The next Committee meeting will take place in Swindon in March 2011 with the date and venue to be decided. It will be followed by an association meet n greet, as an opportunity to get people together ahead of the plans to mark the 70th Anniversary. [Note - this did happen but had no feedback]



## Diary of a Navigator - Pt 13



**Another instalment from John Mitchell's diary of his VIP flying days with the then Prime Minister Winston Churchill during August 1944.**

### MOSCOW CONFERENCE

All three York aircraft of the VIP flight at Northolt were brought to short notice at the beginning of October. Unfortunately, the Skymaster would certainly not be ready. The PM dropped in to Northolt on October 2nd, en route from Chequers to No 10: completely unannounced. Fortunately, Jack Payne was to hand! On October 5th Bill Fraser and I were summoned to the Cabinet Office to meet the ADC and to learn the requirements as they affected 'Ascalon'. It was to be Moscow, via Naples and Cairo: Operation FRUGAL.

It was soon after this usual direct briefing of the Captain, an arrangement sanctioned by the CAS and the AOC-inC Transport Command, that an embarrassing situation blew up for Bill Fraser. A new formation, No 47 Group, had been brought into being in the late summer of 1944 within Transport Command, to control the trunk route squadrons operating out of the UK, to both the liberated Continent and to the Middle and Far East. No 46 Group had already been established to direct those tactical air transport squadrons which had been operating in support of the Airborne Forces, consisting of parachute dropping Dakotas, and the various glider-towing squadrons of Stirlings, Albemarle, etc.

The new AOC of 47 Group learned of the operational control of the York Flight in perhaps a roundabout manner. When 24 Squadron became an all-Dakota squadron within 46 Group, the York Flight had become an appendage to the newly-named Metropolitan Communications Squadron

- all the small communications aircraft left at Hendon. We had continued to enjoy considerable independence from Hendon, tho' left under their administrative umbrella. When Fighter Command handed over Northolt to Transport Command, it became a 47 Group station - with considerable traffic to and from the Continent ever since the Invasion. This Group therefore became responsible for our base service, including our in-flight catering, not only for our four VIP aircraft but also for the increasing number of visiting long-range aircraft from overseas, especially those from No 45 Group in Dorval, Montreal. It was not surprising therefore that the new AOC, in assuming these multifarious responsibilities, wished to join the inner circle privy to the PM's future movements.

Bill Fraser found himself forbidden by the new AOC to have any direct contact with the Flag Commander, Tommy Thompson, at No 10. This was quite contrary to previous arrangements over the planning of future flights. For obvious reasons the number of people in the know of future plans was kept to a minimum: decisions were sometimes made at short notice, and changed just as quickly, in great secrecy - for instance, the journey in the future to Athens on Xmas Eve, 1944. Here was a new Air Officer, a stranger to a well-proven procedure, introducing all the bureaucracy of an additional layer of control (or intervention, whatever it is called).

Planning for the Moscow Conference was going ahead. Indeed, a large number of 47 Group aircraft were involved but there was no need for the PM's movements, except in the most general way, to be included.

It was not until January, 1945, just before the Yalta Conference - when again a large RAF transport force was involved, that the matter was finally ironed out and Bill Fraser's right of access was reinstated. It was all put down to a

*(Continued on page 19)*



'misunderstanding' after some strong words from Tommy Thompson via CAS's office: he had insisted on being able to deal directly with Bill Fraser on appropriate matters. The AOC of 47 Group, with some justification, claimed that he must be responsible - and so be in the picture, for any of his Group's aircraft operations.

So in the end we were able to continue on informal forward planning - in confidence, until the plan was worked up, so long as the ultimate operations order was issued in the AOC's name. Honour satisfied on all sides. A great deal of time was wasted which a smoother personality might have avoided. I believe the AOCinC, 'Ginger' Bowhill, made some caustic remarks about his new Group Commander but by then we could also add a Deputy CinC to the command hierarchy, yet one more to be added to the distribution list and more security lost.

In addition to the aircraft of York Flight, we learnt that the Liberator 'Commando' (AL 504) was to come over from Dorval and No 246 Squadron at Lyneham were to provide three C87 passenger aircraft for the conference. These latter aircraft were developments of the old B24 Liberators but with no bomb bay and fitted with proper passenger seats and sound proofing, with large loading doors. They had started to arrive in the UK under Lease-Lend in June.

The only direct flights to Russia since the German invasion in June 1941 had been either in Catalina flying boats of RAF Coastal Command from Scottish bases to Murmansk, non-stop in some 27 hours of acute discomfort and, for one brief winter's season (1942-43) by BO AC Liberator aircraft from Prestwick directly 'over the top' skirting neutral Sweden to Moscow. The former flights now continued only on a war-operational basis; the latter had been cancelled by the Russian's reluctance to accept them for a variety of reasons, not least because of the risk of overflying the eastern frontline. Thus all RAF (and some limited BOAC) landplane flights took place to Russia via Cairo, where delays were frequent

while Russian diplomatic clearances were obtained, communication and meteorological arrangements made, navigational routing for defence identification laid down. All this from an ally who had been desperate for our material assistance and for the coordination of our so-called joint war strategy.

It did not seem to matter what the rank of the passenger was, or how urgent might be the diplomatic mail or stores being carried. Since this delay was unpredictable it was sometimes necessary to wait in Cairo until signals had been exchanged with our people in Moscow and the green light given to proceed. This exchange was not always helped by the fact that the British Military Mission (called 30 Mission) was essentially military and naval in character under an Army General, whilst all air matters, including supply, were dealt with by the Air Attache who reported directly to the Ambassador!

**8th October 1944.** This was to be our first flight directly across France to the Mediterranean, destination Naples. Airborne at 0015 hours we left the UK coast at Selsey Bill and crossed into France at Barfleur, heading south towards Toulouse. This route had the advantage of avoiding the bad weather often associated with the Rhone Valley in the winter months and the high ground of the Massif Central and the Alpes Maritimes. We were able to cruise at 7,000 feet all the way, flying eastward over the Isles de Hyeres to Cape Corse and so on over Elba to touch the Italian coast at the mouth of the Tiber, thence coastwise to Naples, landing at Pomigliano.

During the flight the PM sent for Jack Payne to have his personal oxygen turned on in his cabin. Jack was always sent for - via Sawyers or one of the stewards, for a variety of purposes - once when the Elsan flushing mechanism became blocked with excess paper!. When Jack had adjusted the oxygen flow and fixed the mask conveniently, he was ordered to take the PM's pulse. Jack's medical knowledge was pretty rudimentary but he had no option but to grasp the proffered wrist; not knowing anything about pulse rates, he put his head round the cabin curtain and



whispered loudly to Sawyers, over the engine noise, "What's normal?" Sawyers lisped 98, or some such figure, which Jack duly relayed to the PM. "Not bad for an old man" commented Mr Churchill. Lord Moran reports on this particular flight in his book, that the PM was taking oxygen all night and 'fiddling about with his mask, oxygen hissing out and a lighted cigar in the other hand'.

We had on board besides the Owner, Lord Moran, General Tug' Ismay, the ADC - Tommy Thompson, Mr John Martin, Inspector Hughes and, of course, Sawyers the valet. So there was no congestion. With the late hour of departure the PM had already dined. We landed at Pomigliano at seven o'clock in the morning soon after dawn, a smooth flight of just a shade under seven hours. The York MW100 which had taken off from Northolt just before us carried Mr Eden, the CIGS, General Ismay and his Deputy Brigadier Jacobs. The York MW101 remained at Northolt and finally left on 10th October, bringing the Polish Prime Minister-in-Exile, Monsieur Mikolajczyk, and certain of his London colleagues - for their fateful meeting with the Lublin Poles in Moscow, under Stalin's evil influence.

At Pomigliano the party had breakfast at the airfield in a specially prepared hut, suitably guarded, where a conference was held, there being insufficient time to go to the Allied Forces HQ at Caserta on the northern side of Naples. After three and a half hours on the ground we left for Cairo at 1230 local time, taking Eden into our aircraft. At a comfortable altitude of 5,000 feet we took our departure from Capri, thence south east over Calabria to hit the North African coast at Bengazi: thence eastward over Tobruk and Sollum to Cairo, flying at 7,000 feet to avoid the bumps.

Smooth flight until we landed - Eraser's first flight with the PM as Captain. Alas, we were directed to land on the little-used South-North runway at Cairo West which has a nasty crest or hump at the point of touchdown. It was the only time I had ever known Bill Eraser misjudge a landing. It

was dark, of course, on arrival and we hit the deck and bounced - too hard and too slow to make any significant use of a burst of engine to break the next touch down. We landed, or stalled, with a bang and a rattle! Nothing broken, but some glum faces - rapid apologies from Bill.

The plan was to proceed to Moscow that night on the assumption that clearances had been obtained from No 30 Mission. At pre-flight briefing we learned that all was well and the flight schedules accepted. Contemporary political writers refer to the fact the Uncle Joe was all sweetness and light for this conference - unlike Teheran. As soon as we started to refuel 'Ascalon' it was quite clear that one of the undercarriage oleo legs on the starboard side undercarriage was leaking and would not stand the weight of a fully-laden aircraft. It would have to be repaired and the leaking shock absorber seal replaced at once. Bill had no option but to tell the ADC that 'Ascalon' would have to be delayed by the repair and, because of the special 'secret' routing through the Darenelles in the dark (which I refer to later) it would mean a full 24 hour delay. This proved unacceptable to the PM, so arrangements were made hurriedly to transfer the PM's party to York MW100 (flown by Squadron Leader Tony Watson) leaving the balance of passengers to us, to follow on as quickly as we could. The CIGS in his diaries, records that they landed at an unidentified airfield south of Moscow to seek the exact whereabouts of the destination airfield.

With almost superhuman work by Jack Payne and the local RAF maintenance staff led by a splendid Flight Lieutenant Ray, a good friend of Jack's, they off-loaded the fuel, jacked up the aircraft, and exchanged the damaged oleo strut in toto, and had the aircraft ready for take off by 0200 hours local time - only four hours late, but too late for the flight plan.

The PM's aircraft, now York MW100, and the other RAF aircraft involved in the conference

*(Continued on page 21)*



were routed through the Aegean Sea by the island of Carpathos, then over the Dodecanese to Lemnos and Samothrace, avoiding islands known to be still in German hands, entering Turkish territory at its frontier with Greece (Alexandropolis). The route crossed Turkey-in-Europe in darkness and left the north Turkish coast at Midye, on the Black Sea coast. This had a navigational advantage of being a brilliant white sandy stretch of coast, very obvious in the moonlight. Then the route lay direct to the Crimean Coast just north of Sevastopol and so to Simferopol. From there northwards directly to Moscow over Kharkov, Orel and Tula. Turkey was still neutral: with Allied victory now a matter of time, it had presumably been possible to negotiate this route with the Turks, provided that we did not embarrass them by making it too obvious. We had been briefed on which Turkish airfields would be available to us for emergency use - where we would expect to find English-speaking help. I have already recorded earlier that the Turkish Air Force was pro-RAF whereas their army was German-trained with similar sympathies. At our briefing we were also told to avoid flying near major towns such as Izmir and certainly Istanbul, and military areas such as the Dardenelles where we could be expected to attract anti-aircraft fire.

Because of our mechanical delay, 'Ascalon'<sup>1</sup> could not use this route, for in spite of Jack's efforts, it would be daylight by the time we reached the Aegean area. However, we had been instructed to follow on immediately. The direct route north from Cairo over Turkey to the Crimea could not be negotiated with Ankara in time. We suggested an east-about-route, also non-stop, overflying Palestine and Iraq to Lake Urmia in Persia to enter Russian territory at Baku. Our intentions could be signalled to 30 Mission, hopeful that approval would be given in time. We should notify Moscow Central by radio the moment we overflew Russian territory.

*(Part two of this Moscow story will be in Issue 19)*

## Hawker Memorial

### 11/11/11 Info

**If you interested in attending the Hawker Memorial Inauguration on the 11th November 2011 at Ligny-Thilloy, situated 20 miles south of Arras, please contact Chas Whitaker, who is coordinating the Association side of things.**

**Chas may be contacted by email or post as follows:-**

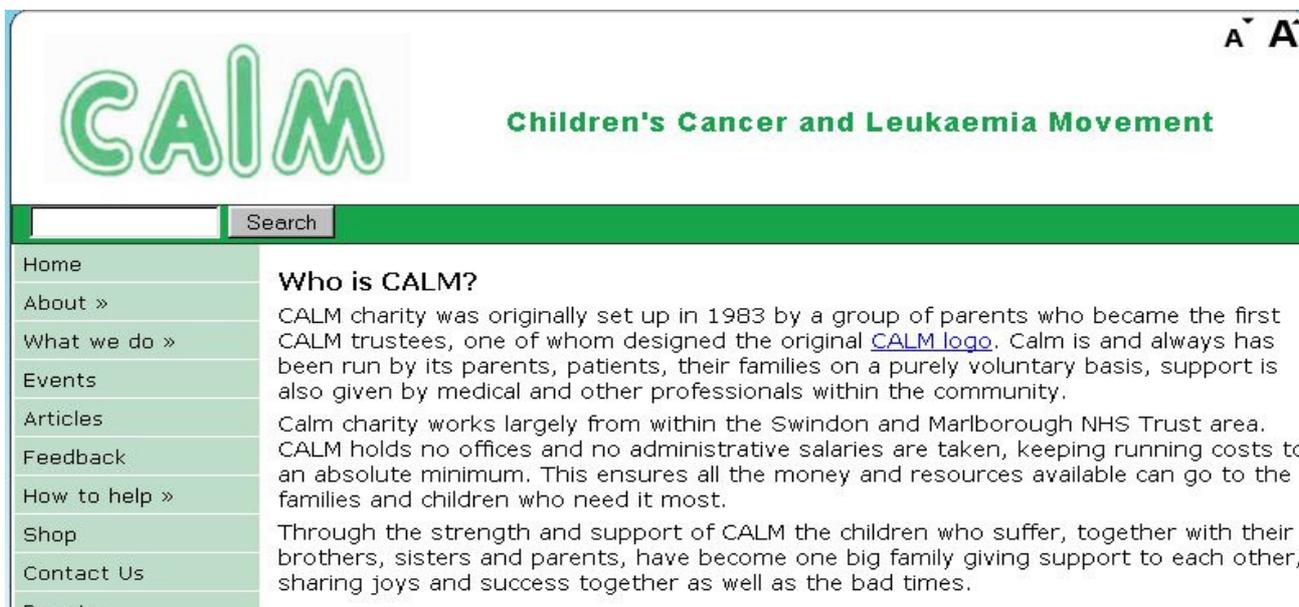
**chaslwhitaker@hotmail.co.uk or  
2 Fulmer Place, FULMER Bucks, SL3 6HR**

**Please state full names of all in your party and your contact details. A finalised itinerary is yet to be published but those details will be passed onto you nearer the time.**



## Notice Board

A couple of notices for you to read. The first is the new sponsored charity, CALM, that the Squadron has adopted since the closure of Burton Hill House School. See below for a screen shot from its web site. Its internet address is <http://calmcharity.org> Also we have details about accommodation for the Reunion weekend. You are of course free to select anywhere but the coach will only be picking up from the Burford area.



**CALM**  
Children's Cancer and Leukaemia Movement

Search

Home  
About »  
What we do »  
Events  
Articles  
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How to help »  
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**Who is CALM?**  
CALM charity was originally set up in 1983 by a group of parents who became the first CALM trustees, one of whom designed the original [CALM logo](#). Calm is and always has been run by its parents, patients, their families on a purely voluntary basis, support is also given by medical and other professionals within the community.  
Calm charity works largely from within the Swindon and Marlborough NHS Trust area. CALM holds no offices and no administrative salaries are taken, keeping running costs to an absolute minimum. This ensures all the money and resources available can go to the families and children who need it most.  
Through the strength and support of CALM the children who suffer, together with their brothers, sisters and parents, have become one big family giving support to each other, sharing joys and success together as well as the bad times.

### ACCOMMODATION 2011 - BURFORD AREA



Shown is a clip of the many Hotels and Guest Houses in the Burford area from a Google search. The local Visitor Information Centre will also be able to assist if you do not have Internet access.

#### [Burford Visitor Information Centre](#)

Located in an historic building, once a brewery, Burford VIC is not only an official Enjoy England Partner but holds a Silver award in the Green Tourism Business Scheme: recognition for the excellent service that the centre provides and the efforts that they make to promote sustainable tourism.

Burford VIC, The Brewery, Sheep Street, Burford, Oxon, OX18 4LS  
Telephone +44 (0)1993 823558, Fax +44 (0)1993 823590, Email [burford.vic@westoxon.gov.uk](mailto:burford.vic@westoxon.gov.uk)

**NOTE - the coach (a snip at only £5/head) will only be picking up guests at the Burford hotels, i.e. High Street and Travel Lodge, then Brize.**

**BOOK DIRECT FOR ALL ACCOMMODATION.**



## Hawker Memorial - Update - £1,200 raised so far



As you may know, XXIV Sqn plans to erect a memorial to its first CO, Major Hawker VC DSO, who was shot down and killed on the Somme by the Red Baron on 23 Nov 1916. After due deliberation and discussions with all interested parties, including the Association, the new OC XXIV Squadron, Wing Commander Tim Jones, has decided that the memorial will be located in the centre of Ligny-Thillois. This village, situated two kilometres south of Bapaume, is very close to the spot where Hawker's DH2 is presumed to have crashed. Your Committee strongly supports OC XXIV's decision to build the memorial in this location.

OC XXIV Squadron has also decided that the memorial will be inaugurated at a special ceremony in Ligny-Thillois on Friday 11 November 2011 - a public holiday and national day of Remembrance in France. Ligny-Thillois, situated 20 miles south of Arras and about 90 miles south-east of Calais, is easy to reach by car. Once again, your Committee strongly supports the decision to inaugurate the memorial on 11 November (11-11-11) and hopes that as many members of the Association as possible will attend what is certain to be a memorable event in the history of XXIV. **[For summary information and contact details for Chas Whitaker - see page 21]**

### **A letter of thanks to all Association Members and Friends**

On behalf of all serving members of XXIV Squadron, I would like to extend my sincere thanks for the substantial donation made recently by Association members to our Lanoe Hawker Memorial Project. The very generous sum (amounting to some £1200) represents an enormous help in our quest to raise funds for the inauguration of the memorial in November. In such straitened times, fundraising can be quite a challenge; it is particularly heartening, therefore, to receive such a significant pledge of support in the current climate.

Members will be aware that work towards the memorial has been underway for several months now. Flight Lieutenant Phil Mobbs has worked tirelessly in his spare time to bring together the vital components of the project, many of which are now coming together. I am grateful also for the support offered by the Association through Chas Whitaker in providing 'hands-on' help for the project. Many of you will know that we are still some way short of our total funding target if we are to secure a DH2 flypast. As a result of the Association's donation however, the building of the memorial itself is assured; a great result. The money you have raised will go directly towards its construction.

We are very much looking forward to November, and to being re-united with members of the Association in France. Our aim is to conduct a sober, poignant and fitting commemoration of a great historical figure. I believe the plans we have will do justice to the memory of Lanoe Hawker and the sacrifice he made while serving on XXIV Squadron. For your contribution to this, I am very grateful.

Yours, Tim Jones (OC XXIV Squadron)



## Late News - Summer Social,



### SUMMER SOCIAL - 8th June - Bibury Court

At last an excuse for a leisurely lunch in the delightful Cotswold beauty spot of Bibury and more specifically the Bibury Court Hotel, which was looking its best today on the 8th June.

Plans laid in place some many months ago for today's XXIV Squadron Association Summer Social, kicked in on cue with almost 40 members and guests driving from all corners of the country for the event. The lunch had a least a three fold purpose and so made the most use of the few hours we had together. Number one was of course to just to get together, second to meet up with Wing Commander Tim Jones who had taken over the Squadron since we last met up in October 2010 and thirdly to hand over a cheque for £1,000 towards the Hawker Memorial Project.

It was full marks on all three objectives with a huge amount of satisfaction for all making the last goal of raising the £1,200 towards placing a lasting marker in the fields of France in memory of Major Hawker VC DSO. More details of that event which **will** be on the 11th of the 11th of the 11th.

Suffice it to say a very convivial time was had by one and all as we wish the Squadron every success in a smooth transition over to RAF Brize Norton in the next couple of weeks.

